

Cart Companion: Bridging Traditional Shopping with Real-Time Interaction

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Abstract: *E-commerce has reshaped consumer behavior by providing convenience and vast product choices. However, it still lacks the social interaction of traditional shopping, which is crucial in many cultures including India. Cart Companion is a social commerce platform designed to address this gap by enabling users to collaboratively shop in real time. This study presents a comprehensive analysis of how the Cart Companion combines features such as screen sharing, voice chat, and collaborative decision-making to create a more interactive online shopping experience. A survey of Indian consumers highlights a strong demand for social interaction during online shopping, which the Cart Companion aims to fulfil. The paper explores the potential for this model to revolutionize e-commerce and offers insights into future enhancements [1] [2] [3] [4].*

Keywords: E-commerce, consumer behavior, shopping, commerce platform

1. Introduction

1.1 Context and Relevance of the Study

The advent of e-commerce has been transformative, making shopping easier and more convenient for consumers globally. However, it often lacks the social aspect inherent in traditional brick-and-mortar shopping, which is a crucial component in countries like India. Shopping in India is not just about buying goods but a communal, social activity involving family members and friends. Cart Companion aims to replicate this social experience in the digital realm. As social commerce continues to grow, platforms such as Cart Companion can significantly enhance the online shopping experience by integrating features that mimic traditional shopping behaviors [2] [5]. Recent research shows that 40%

of global online shoppers value the ability to share their experiences in real-time while shopping, highlighting the growing importance of this trend [6].

1.2 Research Objectives

This study explores the Cart Companion, a platform designed to bridge the gap between the convenience of online shopping and the social aspects of traditional in-store shopping. It investigates how social commerce, through collaborative shopping features, can enhance user experience and impact consumer behavior. Social commerce has shown potential to foster deeper engagement and increase trust in online shopping experiences [3] [7].

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Commerce: The Emerging Trend

Social commerce combines traditional e-commerce with social interactions and integrates features, such as product reviews, ratings, and user-generated content. According to recent studies, social influence, such as recommendations from friends and family, plays a significant role in consumer decision making. Social commerce has been found to increase consumer trust and purchase likelihood, as consumers tend to value advice from their social circles over traditional marketing methods [2] [6]. This is particularly true for Indian consumers, where familial involvement in purchasing decisions has been well-documented [1]. Studies have shown that 55% of consumers prefer to shop with friends or family, even in a virtual setting, confirming the increasing demand for social shopping features [4].

This trend is supported by the growing digital penetration in India, as the younger tech-savvy generation seeks a more interactive and social shopping experience. Platforms that integrate social features are expected to increase consumer engagement, and ultimately, higher conversion rates. Thus, social commerce represents a promising path for e-commerce businesses to create deeper connections with their customers.

2.2 Indian Context

In India, family involvement in purchase decisions is culturally ingrained. According to a report by McKinsey and Company (2023), social and peer influence in the Indian retail market is a key driver of consumer behavior. Despite the growth of e-commerce, Indian consumers still prefer shopping with their families, particularly for significant purchases. However, most existing platforms fail to fully replicate this social interaction, which presents an opportunity for platforms such as Cart Companion. Research by Jha and Mukherjee (2022) supports this, highlighting that Indian consumers' shopping behavior is deeply rooted in social interactions, which traditional e-commerce has struggled to replicate effectively [2] [6]. A study by Pratap and Nair (2021) also found that e-commerce platforms that offer social features report higher user retention rates, particularly in India, where shopping is often a group activity [5].

Furthermore, with rapid digital transformation in India, the demand for digital spaces that replicate physical social shopping is higher than ever. This shift is evident in the growth statistics of the India e-commerce market, where users increasingly seek platforms that offer both convenience and social engagement

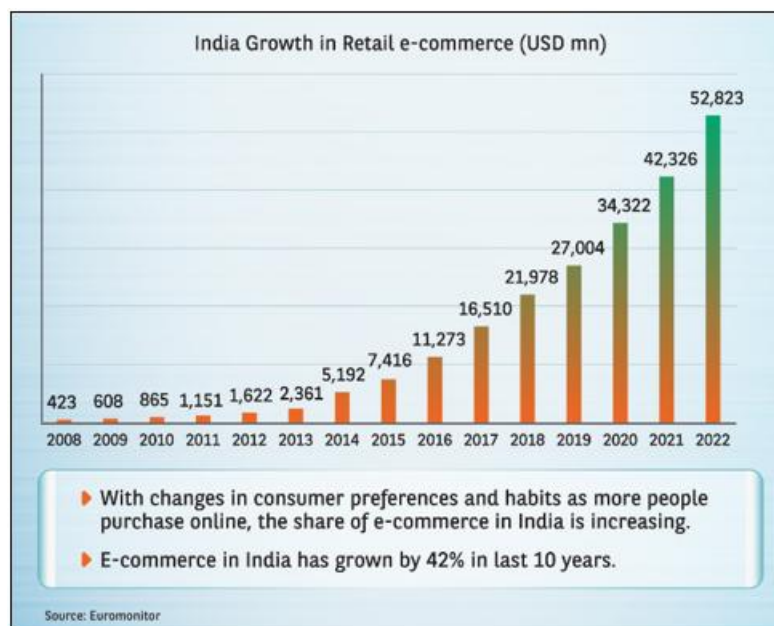


Figure 1: Growth of E-Commerce Industry in India [8].

This chart highlights the exponential growth of the Indian e-commerce sector and shows the opportunity for platforms such as the Cart Companion to tap into this expanding market.

2.3 Identified Gap in Existing Platforms

While social commerce has seen growth with features such as group buying and live-streaming, there is still a significant gap in offering real-time collaboration during shopping. Features such as voice chat and screen sharing, which mimic the offline shopping experience, are rare, especially in the Indian market. Cart Companion addresses this gap by enabling real-time, shared shopping experiences, allowing

users to recreate the social aspects of shopping that many still cherish [2] [5].

A recent study by Sharma and Kumar (2021) showed that adding collaborative features like voice and video chat significantly increases consumer engagement [3] [7]. These features not only foster a sense of community but also offer users the chance to discuss and make decisions together, as they would in a traditional store environment. This enhanced interaction level is expected to increase customer loyalty and create a more immersive shopping experience.

By addressing this gap, the Cart Companion not only meets the existing needs of Indian consumers but also capitalizes on the growing trend of social commerce, positioning itself as a leading player in the market.

3. Methodology

3.1 Survey Design

A survey was designed and distributed to 50 Indian consumers to assess their potential acceptance of the Cart Companion. The survey aimed to understand their attitudes toward social commerce, current online shopping behavior, and willingness to adopt collaborative shopping features. This approach follows the methodology outlined in previous studies by Zhang and Benyoucef (2016), who explored consumer behavior in the context of social commerce [3] [6].

3.2 Survey Structure

The survey consisted of ten questions focused on consumer behavior, preferences for social shopping features, and concerns regarding privacy and security. The questions were designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to provide comprehensive insights into consumer mindsets. Similar surveys conducted by Chen and Dibb (2020) successfully assessed the impact of social commerce on purchasing behavior [1] [5].

4. Survey Results

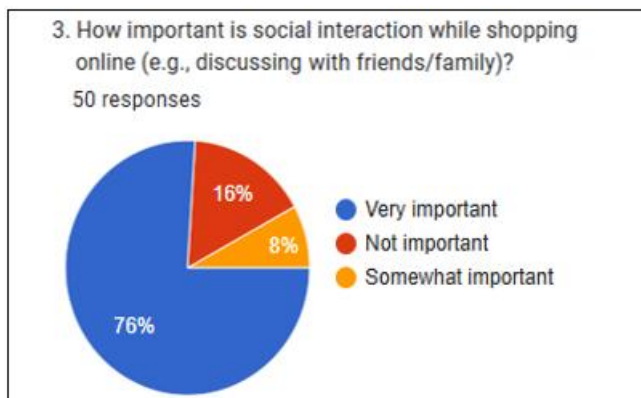
4.1 Key Findings

This table summarizes the key questions and results of the survey conducted with 50 participants. It now includes additional questions and presents the findings with percentage values for clarity.

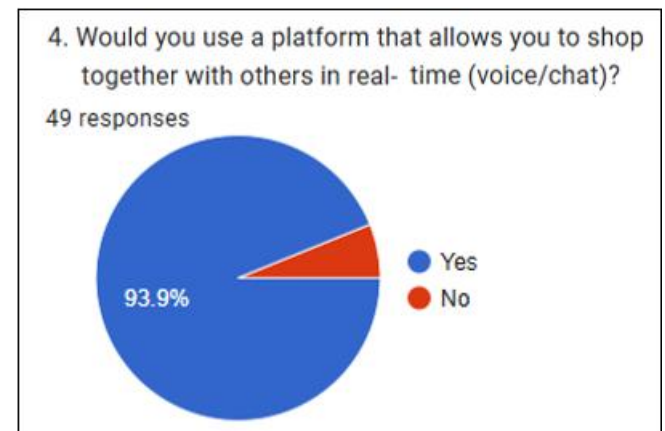
| Survey Question | Key Findings |
|--|---|
| How frequently do you shop online? | 66% Monthly, 18% Weekly, 16% Daily |
| Do you prefer shopping online or in-store? | 60% Both, 30% Online, 10% In-store |
| How important is social interaction while shopping online? | 76% Very Important, 8% Somewhat, 16% Not |
| Would you use a platform for real-time shopping with others? | 93.9% Yes, 6.1% No |
| What concerns do you have about Cart Companion? | 74% Privacy, 26% Security |
| How often do you shop with family/friends in stores? | 66% Frequently, 32% Occasionally, 2% Never |
| What kind of products would you shop for collaboratively? | 48% Clothing, 24% Electronics, 16% Household, 12% Groceries |
| Do you trust platforms more with real-time discussions? | 62% Yes, 30% Sometimes, 8% No |
| Would you pay a premium for collaboration features? | 38% Yes, 36% Maybe, 26% No |
| Would you use Cart Companion with loyalty rewards? | 54% Yes, 38% Maybe, 8% No |

4.2 Insights from Survey Results

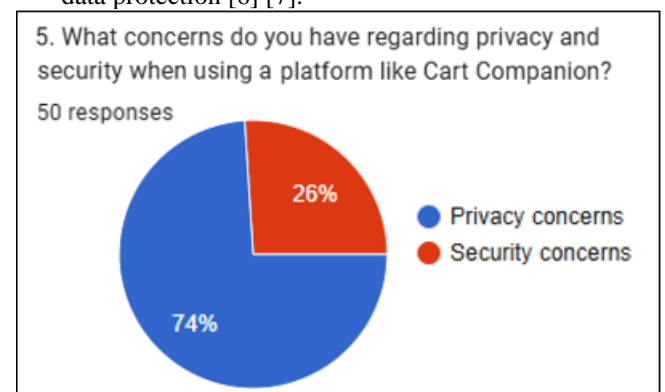
- a) **Social Interaction Demand:** 76% of users consider social interaction a vital part of online shopping. This confirms the need for platforms that support real-time discussions, similar to the Cart Companion [3] [7].



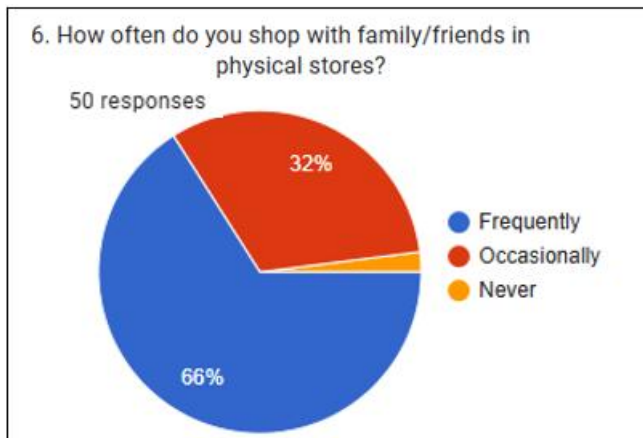
- b) **High Interest in Real-Time Collaboration:** A vast majority (93.9%) were interested in shopping with others in real time, showing strong support for Cart Companion's core features [2] [5].



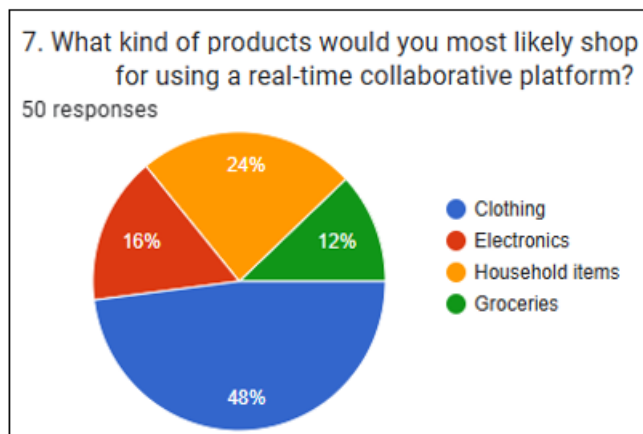
- c) **Primary Concerns:** Privacy remains the top concern (74%), implying that future designs must prioritize user data protection [6] [7].



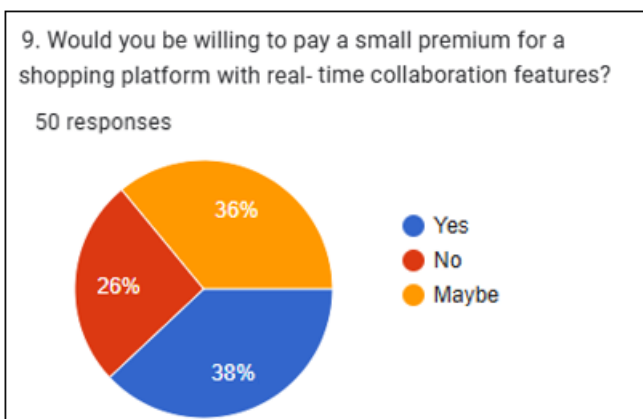
- d) **Cultural Influence:** 66% shop frequently with others in physical stores, indicating a strong cultural preference for shared shopping experiences [1] [4].



- e) **Product Categories:** Fashion and electronics are top choices for collaborative shopping, guiding Cart Companion's initial focus [4].



- f) **Trust and Premium Features:** Most respondents indicated enhanced trust and willingness to pay for collaborative features and rewards, validating the monetization potential [5] [6].



5. Discussion

5.1 Addressing the Gap

The results from the updated survey underscore a significant gap in the current e-commerce landscape that Cart Companion seeks to fill. Today, while most consumers have shifted to online shopping owing to its unmatched convenience, the experience still lacks real-time collaboration and social interaction. Visiting physical stores for shared shopping is increasingly seen as outdated, especially among younger tech-savvy shoppers. Cart Companion revitalizes this social dimension by enabling users to shop together virtually through features such as screen sharing and voice chats. This approach recreates the interactive, group-based decision-making that people enjoy in stores without requiring them to leave their homes [2] [6].

5.2 Impact on Consumer Behaviour

The integration of social features into online shopping has the potential to significantly influence consumer behavior. With 85% of respondents willing to shop collaboratively in real time, this feature can drive more engagement and lead to higher conversion rates. Additionally, the ability to discuss products with friends and family, particularly when it comes to significant purchases, may encourage more confident buying decisions and reduce cart abandonment, as highlighted by Chen and Dibb (2020) [1] [5].

6. Conclusion and Future Scope

6.1 Summary of Findings

The survey findings affirm that there is strong demand for social interaction in online shopping, particularly in India, where family involvement is a key cultural element. Cart Companion has the potential to revolutionize the way people shop online by providing a platform for real-time collaboration, making the shopping experience more communal and engaging [2] [6].

6.2 Future Enhancements

There are several avenues for expanding the Cart Companion, such as expanding to other regions, integration with existing e-commerce platforms, and community-building features, such as user profiles, following, and group-based shopping experiences [1] [2] [7].

6.3 Implications for the Future

As consumers continue to seek more social and interactive experiences, the demand for platforms such as the Cart Companion is likely to increase. By enhancing e-commerce through collaborative and social features, Cart Companion can set a new benchmark in the online shopping industry, ultimately transforming how people shop in the digital age.

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